

ASLEF

The ASSOCIATED SOCIETY of LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS & FIREMEN

JOURNAL



SEPTEMBER 2015

I can remember
standing by the wall
and the guns shot
above our heads



MARZ COLOMBINI: Plight of the people of Palestine
JOHN STITTLE: The real cost of the privatised railway
GREGOR GALL: Five ways round the new TU Bill

Lee Salter on Greece
and the Secret City



Hussein Ezzedine on
MotD at Tolpuddle



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union since 1880

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On the picket line at Stratford

Solidarity on Tube is truly awesome

A S I write we are still in dispute over the Tube and, although I know the strength of feeling and unity we always get, the solidarity demonstrated has been truly awesome. This has led to talks continuing but we are a very long way apart. The company, which has hidden for years behind the company plan, when we wished to improve things, chose to obviate the framework agreement (the machinery) and announce a start date for the Night Tube. No negotiation, no consultation, just an act of malicious bad faith. Strange, as none of the unions involved are fundamentally against a properly resourced Night Tube. Having acted in bad faith they then declared a one-off payment with no guarantees or limits on rostering or staffing levels to protect existing agreements or the work/life balance. Health and safety not a factor, either, on a system that saw an increase in sexual assaults last year.

According to the press it's all about 'greedy Tube drivers' and making comparisons with other workers in a race to the bottom. We want all workers to be properly paid, with proper (not zero hours) contracts of employment, not false comparisons by those who do not understand the nature of what we do. We then get the lies that what they are offering is reasonable and London Mayor Boris Johnson, a man with four jobs, who has just had a 10% increase for one of them, and signed a contract for £500k on another, says we should be grateful! While Patrick McLoughlin, the Secretary of State for Transport, says it's political. It isn't. It's industrial. In March we were unaware either of the Conservative victory in May or the intended dishonourable and despicable act of bad faith by London Underground.

On the Tube, and everywhere else on the rail network in this country, rest assured that this trade union will continue to fight against bad faith, imposed conditions and political lies.

Yours fraternally

Mick Whelan, general secretary



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Cover photo of a young Palestinian girl in the Aida refugee camp in Bethlehem by Tim Lezard



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ABOUT **ASLEF**

The **ASLEF Journal** is published every month by ASLEF

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London calling to the Underworld

THE capital ground to a halt again last month as ASLEF drivers on London Underground walked out in a dispute over the introduction of the Night Tube. On Thursday 6 August – as on Thursday 9 July – the solidarity of drivers across the network meant that not a single Tube train ran.

'We regret any inconvenience to the public,' said GS Mick Whelan. 'But London Underground cannot simply force through new staff rosters for a Night Tube without proper consultation. We are proud that our members are prepared to stand in solidarity to defend their work/life balance.'

Striking ASLEF drivers were joined on their pickets by members of the RMT, TSSA and Unite who are also in dispute with TfL. Messages of solidarity flooded in from other unions.

ASLEF believes that London, as a world-class capital city, needs a Night Tube. But not at the expense of our members – the drivers who deliver the service. 'Tube drivers are entitled to a family life, too, and some sort of proper work/life balance,' said District 8 Organiser Finn Brennan. 'We aren't opposed to all night services but want them introduced in a fair and sensible way which rewards staff for their hard work and the contribution they make to the success of London Underground.'

As this issue of the *Journal* went to press Terry Wilkinson, the EC member for District 8, was still talking to LU management in the



ASLEF in action on picket lines in London

hope of doing a deal. But the company has shown bad faith throughout the negotiations, first by trying to force through new rosters without negotiation, and then by failing to deliver on the number of nights a driver has to work, despite public assurances by TfL managing director, and interim Commissioner, Mike Brown and his chief operating officer Steve Griffiths.

QUOTE...

'As the cuts start to bite, now is not the time for Labour to be seen as Tory-lite. We did not lose 40 seats in Scotland because we were too left-wing.'

– **Cat Smith, Labour MP for Lancaster & Fleetwood, in Tribune**

...UNQUOTE



GS Mick Whelan and EC president Tosh McDonald represented ASLEF at a commemorative event on 31 July to rename the RMT's national education centre in Doncaster after their former general secretary Bob Crow, who died last year.

TOM & JEREMY

If you're a member, registered supporter, or affiliated supporter you can vote – by post or online – in the Labour Party leadership election. Deadline is Thursday 10 September with the result announced two days later on the eve of the TUC. ASLEF has endorsed Jeremy Corbyn for leader and Tom Watson as deputy.

SCOTRAIL FINED

First ScotRail was fined £576,000 for failing to meet service standards – on clean trains and graffiti – in its last year as holder of the ScotRail franchise.

BORIS OFF RAILS AS HE FAILS TO DELIVER TUBE UPGRADE

Transport for London has announced that vital modernisation work on the Circle, District, Hammersmith & City and Metropolitan lines will be delayed following the failure of a £350 million signalling project. The upgrades were due to be completed by 2018 but TfL says the work – with a £760 million bill – is more than five years late. 'The blame for this fiasco is fairly and squarely at the door of Boris Johnson,' said Mick Whelan. 'He has attempted to force through the Night Tube to hide the financial profligacy and incompetent project management of his administration over the last seven years.'

NATIONAL WEEKEND SCHOOL

National organiser Simon Weller is organising a weekend school, covering political economics, at the Jury's Inn in Birmingham on 31 October and 1 November. The cost of the course is £50, including accommodation and meals. Further information from Simon (sweller@aslef.org.uk) or Katy Proctor (proctork@aslef.org.uk) and the closing date for applications is Friday 2 October.

ST MARY-LE-BONE

The annual Marylebone reunion starts at 4.30pm on Friday 30 October at the Allsop Arms, Gloucester Place, London NW1 – just a couple of minutes' walk from Marylebone station. A buffet will be provided and anyone associated with Marylebone branch – past or present – is welcome.



Pack up your troubles in an ASLEF executive rucksack for just £14 (inc p&p); email admin@aslef.org.uk or

visit our online shop at www.aslef.org.uk



Corbyn keeps it real and plays to a full house in Donny



The tale of Mr Jeremy Corbyn

WHO says people don't care about politics any more? It is, says Tosh McDonald, ASLEF's president, just a case of giving the people what they want. In this case, Jeremy Corbyn. More than 450 people packed into the Trades and Labour Club in Doncaster last month for a rally, sponsored by ASLEF, for Jeremy who is standing for the Labour Party leadership against Andy Burnham, Yvette Cooper and Liz Kendall.

'Jeremy excites people,' said Tosh. 'Because he offers straight talking, and honest politics, unblemished by the

unpopular and dishonest compromises of Toxic Tony and the New Labour years.

'The response to Jeremy's campaign proves there is an enormous appetite in this country to oppose the Conservative government's austerity measures and to promote an alternative vision of society based on growth, through public investment, and a rebalancing of

our economy, and society, based on fair taxes, properly funded public services, support for the vulnerable and a fair, just and equitable society.'

Jeremy set out his vision of a society based on innovation, decent jobs and the proper provision of public services, in stark contrast to the ideologically-driven cuts of the Tories.

'People don't want a Labour Party that looks like Tory-lite,' said Tosh. 'They want a real alternative and Jeremy offers people a fresh vision of the future and a better society.'

QUOTE...

'There is no glory in opposition.' –

Chuka Umunna, Shadow

Secretary of State for Business, Innovation & Skills, on *Newsnight*

...UNQUOTE

CONFERENCES

The **Burston strike school** rally is at Burston, near Diss, in Norfolk on Sunday 6 September. The **Trades Union Congress** is at the Brighton Centre from Sunday 13 to Wednesday 16 September and the **Labour Party** conference is at the Brighton Centre from Sunday 27 to Wednesday 30 September. The **Scottish TUC** is at the Caird Hall in Dundee from Monday 18 to Wednesday 20 April 2016.

500 CLUB: Faversham branch, with number 68, won the August draw, scooping the RMS prize money jackpot of £364.



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Off the rails



EMMA SAYLE has never done a proper day's work in her life. The 'society beauty' (as the gossip columns somewhat charitably call her) trades off the fact that she attended Downe House boarding school in Berkshire with the Duchess of Cambridge and is now a 'sextrepreneur' who organises sex parties for the well-heeled through her company Killing Kittens. There are, of course, other names for those who make money out of those in search of sex. Anyway, Kate Middleton's old chum was furious about the Tube strikes. 'My heart bleeds for your dire working conditions,' she tweeted. 'Do some work, you whinging bunch of lazy bastards.' This from a woman who, according to her website, runs 'sex parties for the world's sexual elite.' Emma, say her friends, doesn't do self-awareness and is an irony-free zone. But Sebastian Shakespeare in the *Daily Mail* observed: 'Boris Johnson's response to the strike has been weak, but I dare say Emma could whip the drivers into line.'



NICK COHEN had a somewhat different take on the Tube in *The Observer*. If London Underground stops for 24 hours, he observed, the press does not keep calm and carry on. 'It goes into a funk, as the *Daily Telegraph* proved last week when it lost what self-control it possessed and screamed: "Let's sack the lot of them!"' It was, Nick reminded us, the historian EP Thompson who chronicled how, throughout history, the English upper classes have 'always turned vindictive when the lower orders emerge from the underground and get ideas above their station.' Nick added: 'Tube drivers are not striking about money but about being forced by their managers to work through the night – a demand that might make the most compliant workers militant.'



ALAN TITCHMARSH is not just a passionate gardener, he's passionate about trains, too. Reviewing *The Railways of Great Britain: A Historical Atlas* by Colonel MH Cobb in the *Sunday Telegraph*, he nostalgically recalls 'standing on the local footbridge as a steam

train puffed underneath, covering me in smoke and steam, and bringing down upon me the wrath of my mother as she tried to banish the smuts and smudges of soot from my school shirt in the days before biological washing powder.' Alan adores the work of Michael Cobb, who spent 25 years putting together his atlas, which shows all the railway routes of Britain including, says Alan feelingly, 'those that fell foul of Dr Beeching's axe in the 1960s.'



THE GS has received a nice letter from David Savage, secretary of South West Surrey CLP, thanking us for our help during the general election and praising candidate Howard Kaye's 'enthusiasm, commitment, tireless campaigning and optimism' in 'these dark Tory heartlands.'

Howard, a driver with Virgin Trains East Coast, and EC member for District 5, was, says David, 'a great candidate' who helped the Labour Party achieve the highest share of the vote, and most votes cast, since the seat was reconstituted.

Glory, glory, glory be a banner man...

MICK Whelan, ASLEF's general secretary, and Marz Colombini, executive committee member for District 1, joined members of Tonbridge branch at the Somerhill pub near the station on Thursday 13 August for the unveiling of their new branch banner.

Although the meeting was held at the height of the English summer, and in the heart of the Garden of England, London and the south-east had suffered torrential downpours and flash floods all day, which put the harvest in Kent on hold, and the landlady of the Somerhill joked that Noah had tied his Ark at the end of the road in case the Medway burst its banks again.

But the meeting was very well-attended, with numbers swelled by drivers from other depots in the district, to hear branch secretary Colin Pratt explain all the hard work that went into the making of the banner, and why all the different images appear in the design.

Mick and Marz brought members up to speed with industrial and political issues and explained why now, more than ever, showing solidarity with your colleagues in the union, and the labour movement, is so important.

Mick presented service badges to Jim Shillingford (45 years); Viv Livermore (40);



The GS unveils the new Tonbridge banner

Graham Graham, Keith Hodson and Mark Parsons (35); Martin Terry (30); Jeff Perkins (15); Chris Lewis and Roland Orchard (10); Colin Pratt (5); and retirement certificates to Jim Shillingford and Tim Saunders.

Then members enjoyed a few pints of Harvey's best bitter, brewed down the road in Lewes, East Sussex, and a delicious buffet cooked by the landlady of the Somerhill. It was, as Mick and Marz said afterwards, a wonderful way of welcoming a new banner, and 'an impressive new addition to the heritage of this great union.'

QUOTE...

'It all sounded different before the election. The Chancellor, George Osborne, promised a northern powerhouse, connecting the cities of the north in one booming economic entity, forged by fast transport connections. Now, on a packed evening train doing the slow traverse from Manchester Piccadilly to Leeds, scepticism is rife.'

Gwyn Topham in *The Guardian*
...UNQUOTE

End of the line

Penzance branch marked the retirement of Keith Wellavize after 50 years' service on the railway and 45 loyal years in ASLEF, many of them as LDC rep. Keith started his career as a cleaner at Saltley in 1965, progressing to driver after passing out at Birmingham New Street. Two hundred people, some travelling many miles, came down to the rugby club in Penzance to help him celebrate. 'He is one of the last drivers still working who fired steam engines,' said his daughter Joanne. 'It's the end of a generation.' Keith had opportunities for promotion but said 'All I want to do is drive



Brian, Keith and Andy

engines.' Our District Organiser Brian Corbett and EC member Andy Hudd presented Keith with his 45 year badge and a gift from the union for all his hard work and dedication to ASLEF. All of us at the branch wish him a long and happy retirement and look forward to his return as an RMS member when he will be made very welcome.

Mike Butler, Penzance branch secretary

Paddy's power

Perth branch gathered to say a fond farewell to Bro Paddy Panton after 42 years' service. A good turnout was addressed by District Organiser Kevin Lindsay, who gave a detailed report, concentrating on our relationship with our new franchise holder, Abellio. Kevin presented 200 years' worth of long service awards to Pete Brown, Tom Burns and



Perth celebrating until the barmaid's bell

Cammy Duncan (10 years); Andy Scott and Mike Morrison (30); Alan Gardner and Stevie Petrie (35); and Roy Hutton (40) before handing Paddy his retirement certificate and a bottle of

Aberfeldy malt whisky. The celebrations continued long into the evening, only being halted by the sound of the barmaid's bell.

Grant Murchie, branch secretary



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RAIL FARES HAVE RISEN BY 25% SINCE 2010

Rail fares for season tickets, and other regulated fares, have risen three times faster than wages over the last five years, according to new research by Transport for Quality of Life for Action for Rail. Between 2010 and 2015 the privatised train companies put fares up by 25% while wages rose by just 9%. 'The government wants the public to subsidise the train companies' profits,' said Frances O'Grady, general secretary of the TUC.

'We raise the watchword, Liberty. We will, we will, we will be free!'

**Festival reporter HUSSEIN
EZZEDINE reflects on a
successful three days at
Tolpuddle – and a football
game you won't ever see on
Match of the Day**

EVERY July thousands descend on the village of Tolpuddle in Dorset to remember the sacrifice made by six farm workers – George Loveless; his brother James; James Hammett; James Brine; Thomas Standfield; and his son John – who in 1834 were charged with making an illegal oath. Their real crime was forming a trade union to protest about their meagre pay of six shillings a week.

The Tolpuddle Martyrs were sentenced at Dorchester Assizes to seven years' transportation for having the temerity to stand up for themselves and fight against poverty, austerity and injustice. That is what trades unions have been doing for the best part of 200 years and why the story of Tolpuddle and its martyrs is at the heart of the history of the trade union movement in Britain.

Their legacy continues to inspire us, as it has inspired others to fight against injustice and oppression – and win. Because the people rose up, with a mass demonstration in London, and an 800,000 name petition delivered to Parliament, and for three years the men's families were supported by donations. The government eventually relented,

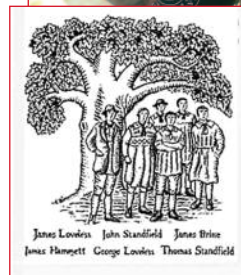
the men were pardoned, and returned home as heroes. The courageous actions of these men paved the way and that's why we gather to march through a sleepy Dorset village every year – to celebrate the Tolpuddle Martyrs and gain strength from their sacrifices.

With the Tories back in government you might expect a despondent atmosphere. Yet there was an air of defiance, and attendance was well up on previous years. This was reflected in the high turnout of ASLEF members, a constantly busy stall, and the new range of tee-shirts proving popular with members of other trade unions as well as our own.

Some of us rose early to claim a sought-after place on a tour of the court where sentence was handed down. But it's not all speeches, debate, and history lessons. As has become traditional ASLEF hosted a lively Saturday evening barbecue. Another tradition is a good natured challenge with the TSSA. In the past this has included a wheelbarrow race, but this year it was a five-or-so-a-side football match. As is often the case on the English football field the rare moments of finesse amid the head high tackles and wild lunges were provided by the lone Scotsman, who put ASLEF in the lead with an exquisite finish. Unfortunately Howard Kaye was forced to retire with blood streaming from a broken nose; bizarrely inflicted by team mate



ASLEF in action at Tolpuddle...



...and lighting the flame of the ASLEF barbie

Marz Colombini's shoulder. Howard was heard spluttering through blood about the excesses of typically robust Italian defending. Possibly distracted by the sight of paramedics working pitchside the lead wasn't extended and there was a shock late equaliser. But, as you'd expect, the GS led from the front, stepping up to rifle home the first penalty in the shootout. And with goalkeeper Andy Hudd – 'the coat of many colours' – prowling his line and producing a feline display of agility, victory for ASLEF was assured.

Ed D'Bell and his dad brought along a tasty Sunday lunchtime curry – perfect before marching with our banners. Easily the biggest I've seen, and when finally we reached the end there was a

surprise in store for Peter Wright of Weymouth branch who was clearly delighted to be presented with his 25 year badge by the GS. The festival was rounded off on stage by The Beat, taking us back to their 1980s heyday, then festival favourite Billy Bragg. The sound of the 1980s poignant as the Tories again attack our trade union movement. We left Tolpuddle tired, and in some cases sore, yet refreshed and inspired for the struggles ahead.

QUOTE...

'The Labour Party is a moral crusade or it is nothing.' – **Harold Wilson**

...UNQUOTE

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Greece is the word



LEE SALTER, lecturer in media and communications at Sussex University, and co-founder of the Bristol Radical Film Festival, wants your help to reveal what's going on in Greece

WE ARE living through one of the most successful propaganda campaigns in history. Bankers, financiers, media moguls and stooge politicians have managed to convince most of the population of Europe that disabled people, workers and the vulnerable caused a debt crisis. But there is no debt crisis.

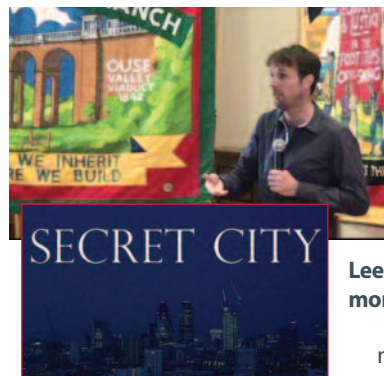
Four years ago Michael Chanan and I made a film called *Secret City*, which explained how the City of London pushed for the financial deregulation that caused the financial crisis that our politicians have conveniently stopped talking about. More than 70,000 people have now watched this film.

We have recently returned

from Athens, where the devastation inflicted by the financiers is clear to see. There was no disagreement about what was happening: the bailout that the Greek people heroically rejected sought to immiserate the people and give billions directly to the banks as interest on loans the people didn't take out. The Greek people saw nothing.

In the UK, we don't know who took out loans, why and for what. We don't even know to whom the state owes the money. So why should we pay those loans? Remember, your money has already been used to pay more than £1.5 trillion to banks as a reward for causing the crisis.

We were in Greece to start work on a new documentary film,



Money Puzzles, the follow up to *Secret City*, so we can tell the real story of money and debt in a documentary that will be released for free. But we have no money to do this, so we have launched a crowdfunding campaign and



Lee tells branch members about the money puzzles of the secret city

need your help. We seek no money for ourselves but must cover other costs. If you email me (salter.lee@googlemail.com) I will be happy to send you a free copy of *Secret City* so you can see the sort of work we do. To find out more, visit our website at www.moneypuzzles.net

QUOTE...

'We have been an extremely well-meaning but largely amateur operation in recent times against a ruthless Tory machine, largely run by George Osborne, who will probably be our next Prime Minister and our opponent in 2020.' – **Dan Jarvis, Labour MP for Barnsley Central, in the Daily Telegraph**

...UNQUOTE

Another brick in the wall

MITCHELL SETCHELL reports on a successful course for ASLEF's FGW ULRs

THREE First Great Western union learning reps have got the BTEC level 3 extended diploma in education and training, an instructional qualification required by anyone teaching vocational subjects. It means you have the skills and knowledge to prepare, plan, deliver and evaluate basic teaching and learning sessions.

The highlight of the course was a chance to put theory into practice with each student in turn presenting a practical PowerPoint based micro teach. Subjects varied dramatically from how to make children's party toys to the art of photography and even a full explanation of



Top of the form: John Griffiths (Swansea), Michael Setchell (Paddington) and Kerry Cassidy (Bristol)

the offside rule in football!

All in all, a very in-depth and comprehensive course with many of us suffering from brain freeze at some point! That said, it was a very interesting, well delivered and worthwhile course, from which all of us gained valuable experience as ASLEF union learning reps.

YOUNG PEOPLE TURN TO TRAIN

Young people are 'falling out of love with the car' and turning to trains instead, according to a new report for the Office of Rail and Road and the Independent Transport Commission. It reveals that young people are concerned about the high cost of car ownership – including insurance, parking and learning to drive – and prefer public transport where they can read a book or use a mobile phone.

Matthew Niblett of the ITC said: 'The use of public transport is growing across all groups – young, old, business, migrant, minority ethnic groups – while people are adopting much more utilitarian attitudes towards car ownership.'

FLYING SCOTSMAN FLYING BACK

The *Flying Scotsman* is ready to return to the iron road after a ten year £4 million refit. The historic steam locomotive, bought by the National Railway Museum for £2.3 million in 2004, has been refurbished by Riley & Son at Bury to run on the main line once again. The loco, designed by Sir Nigel Gresley, and originally built for the London & North Eastern Railway, was the first locomotive to travel at 100mph. It will run in British Railways green livery from London to York next year.



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SAFETY FIRST: Colin Smith and Alan Moss are running another of their popular safety seminars in Liverpool on 8 October. 'We will have industry speakers in the morning, including our general secretary, and workshops, advice and best practice in the afternoon,' said Alan. All safety reps from District 3 are welcome and encouraged to attend to assist them in their role. Further information from Colin or Alan.

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As the Tories try to smash the unions once and for all

GREGOR GALL suggests five ways of subverting the intentions of their new Trade Union Bill

THE Tories have acted quickly – as they said they would – on their election manifesto promise to tighten the legislation governing strikes and industrial action by raising the thresholds on what is required for a lawful ballot mandate. So, in addition to the existing simple majority rule, there are two new ones.

The first requires at least half of eligible union members to vote so that a minimum turnout is established. The second is that in essential public services – health, education, fire and transport – there will also be a requirement that at least 40% of all those entitled to vote must vote for action (meaning that non-voters are now treated as ‘no’ voters).

NO PUBLIC CLAMOUR

There is no demonstrable evidence that new rules are needed for Britain is experiencing not a strike ‘wave’ but a strike ‘drought’. Strikes accounted for only just a little more than 750,000 days not worked in 2014.

No public clamour to clamp down on strikes exists either – it was not an issue on the doorsteps during the election and no public petitions on the matter exist. Ideology, not attested need, is the driving force here – along with the desire of the Tories to kick unions further when they are already down.

And there is also no doubt that the changes will make one of the tightest sets of rules in Europe even tighter. While Tony Blair said in March 1997 that British labour law was ‘the most restrictive on trade unions in the Western world’ Labour subsequently did very little to undo the measures that had led to this situation. Now the Conservatives are going to enter territory that not even Margaret Thatcher and the Tories in the 1980s imagined possible.

Although the union reaction has, understandably, been one of fury with, for example, the TUC saying the new rules ‘will make legal strikes close to impossible’, all is not lost because the new rules will not mean workers will be quite as hamstrung as the Tories intend and as some unions fear.

With the prospects of defeating the Trade Union Bill inside or outside parliament not good, attention should turn to what practical measures trade unions can take to subvert the



David Cameron (far left) is pushing the boss class agenda of British business even further than Margaret Thatcher (left) dared

Tories’ intentions.

First, there will be many workers for whom meeting the new rules will be quite easy. These are workers who have greater strategic leverage and a high sense of specialist or occupational identity. Recent examples have been found in London Underground (ASLEF), Network Rail (the RMT), the Sellafield nuclear plant (GMB) and Tata Steel (Community, UCATT and Unite). What these workers have in common is not just that they are well organised, and powerful, but are cohesive work groups with high union identity.

A NOD AND A WINK

Second, there will be instances where workers decide to ignore the law and strike unofficially. This will be when workers are not balloted by

“ **THE TORIES ARE GOING TO ENTER TERRITORY THAT NOT EVEN THATCHER IMAGINED** ”

their union for fear of not meeting the thresholds or where the ballot thresholds are not met but workers want to strike anyway. Either will result in wildcat strikes. Whether the initiative to wildcat comes from the grassroots or the union in an unofficial ‘nod and a wink’ way remains to be seen.

Third, trade unions will become more selective in deciding who is balloted (and



where and when) for strike action so that ballots are not lost. Some unions may cease to ballot members nationally, preferring instead to ballot particular nations, regions or areas, or particular grades and groups within a national bargaining unit where membership is stronger and more militant.

Fourth, more unions will focus on industrial action short of a strike as a lower cost alternative to striking and members will, thus, be more prepared to vote ‘yes’ in a ballot for industrial action short of a strike because there is little or no loss in pay involved. Such action can take the form of an overtime ban, work to rule, work to contract or go slow. They can be targeted to the most opportune times in terms of an employer’s business or operations. For some workers in some organisations action short of a strike is more effective than strike action.

Fifth, the kind of leverage campaigns most obviously run by the likes of Unite and the GMB will become more important when strike action cannot be delivered or is in doubt.

WORKPLACE BALLOTS

Of course, if the Tories had really wanted to increase turnouts and strengthen mandates, as they professed, they would have introduced e-balloting or workplace ballots. But they did not.

Making this point – and that few MPs would be elected if the same rules were applied to Westminster elections – is politically necessary but does not get us very far in practical terms. The five options laid out above provide more of a handle on subverting the intentions of the Trade Union Bill.

Gregor Gall is Professor of Industrial Relations at the University of Bradford, Visiting Lecturer in International Labour and Trade Union Studies at Ruskin College, Oxford, and a visiting lecturer at the University of Hertfordshire

Time for government to give rail freight a fair crack of the whip

PHILIPPA EDMUNDS, manager of Freight on Rail, reveals the hidden subsidies that give road haulage an edge

HOW many times have we all heard the reasonable sounding phrase 'Rail freight has to compete with HGVs on price?' Because what is always overlooked is the lack of a level playing field between the two modes of transport, which explains why it is so difficult for rail to compete with HGVs, especially in consumer markets.

So Freight on Rail commissioned new research, using existing government criteria, to investigate this market distortion. *Heavy Goods Vehicles: Do They Pay for the Damage They Cause?* by the Metropolitan Transport Research Unit found that HGVs receive a subsidy of £6.5 billion each year and pay less than one-third of the costs associated with their activities in terms of road congestion, road collisions, road damage and environmental pollution – costs which are picked up by the taxpayer instead. These conclusions are in line with an MDS Transmodal study in 2007 which found a very similar underpayment – £6 billion – by lorry firms.

TEN TIMES MORE SUBSIDY

Although the financial frameworks for rail and road are different, it is generally accepted that, in both cases, revenues from moving people (in fuel duty, VED and fares) are to some extent used to support the movement of goods. However, the fact that HGVs receive up to ten times more subsidy per tonne carried than does rail, which explains why competing with HGVs is such a challenge for rail.

Furthermore, this research also highlights that, in a number of areas, such as congestion, air pollution, infrastructure maintenance and accidents costs, that once all these factors are

recalculated, using updated values, the likelihood is that the real subsidy to HGVs is even greater than this research shows.

The reasons for reviewing these values are:

- As road damage from the heaviest lorries is estimated to be 160,000 times higher than for a typical car, infrastructure damage is being underestimated. Roads have to be built to a higher specification to cater for HGVs.
- The cost of road collisions involving HGVs is seriously undervalued as HGVs are now six times more likely than cars to be involved in fatal accidents on local roads.
- Congestion is not properly measured as government analysis uses undervalued and outdated figures to calculate the cost of delays imposed on others.
- There is a pressing need to review air pollution impacts especially relating to nitrogen dioxide and particulates despite EU engine improvements.

COMPELLING CASE

We believe the government needs to be transparent so that the level of subsidy is properly acknowledged and mechanisms can be used to correct these distortions. The scale of subsidy to HGVs makes a compelling case for equivalently supporting sustainable freight modes which impose much lower costs on society and the economy. The government's mode shift grants are designed to recognise the wider advantages of rail but currently support less than 15% of rail traffic.

A long-term stable affordable charging regime which enables direct competition with road freight would allow rail freight to



Philippa Edmunds (right) makes the case for freight on rail rather than on road

compete more fairly with HGVs. Ongoing investment in the strategic rail freight network and other key routes to enhance capacity and capability for more diversionary routes would add resilience to the network to make the rail freight offering more viable.

A FAIRER DEAL

Rail freight grants, which are awarded in recognition of the value of removing HGVs from our roads and are only paid for the actual containers removed from the road network, need renewal next March by the DfT. These grants, which cover less than 15% of flows, are fundamental to maintaining rail freight traffic, especially consumer flows, because they do compensate rail to some extent for the lack of parity with HGVs.

Worryingly, as a result of the economic distortion caused by a

lack of internalisation of HGV costs, not only is there poor economic efficiency but also scarce government resources could be misallocated as funding decisions are made on flawed premises.

Currently, road haulage is very competitive but not very efficient; almost 30% of HGVs are driving around completely empty and almost half of HGVs are partially loaded either by weight or volume.

Despite these challenges, the latest figures show that rail freight is worth £1.6 billion per annum to UK plc and, as Claire Perry, the Rail Minister, said in June: 'Rail freight is a real success story.'

Next time somebody asks why there is not more rail freight, you may want to explain, as I do at every opportunity, so we can try to make sure that rail freight and society get a fairer deal from government.

I... I can remember standing by the wall



The EC resolved to send three ASLEF representatives on a trade union delegation to Palestine to see for themselves the situation on the ground. MARZ COLOMBINI, EC member for District 1, reports on their fact finding visit to the West Bank

YOU notice a faint smell; vaguely familiar but impossible to place. It gets slightly stronger, then suddenly and without warning it grabs the back of your throat. You have difficulty breathing, your nose is running, your eyes are streaming, they sting unbearably and you cannot see. You are temporarily blind. These are the effects, and my first experience, of tear gas.

How did a group of British trade unionists find ourselves on the receiving end of an Israeli soldier's chemical weaponry in the Occupied Territories? The truth is we were not his target. We were bystanders caught in the crossfire. The soldier's real target was a group of five Palestinian children, not yet in their teens, playing in the street at the entrance to Aida, the refugee camp in Bethlehem that is their home.

THE GUNS SHOT ABOVE OUR HEADS

In our rule book, under Objects of ASLEF, one of our aims is 'To recognise that trade unionism is, by nature, an international movement, and to support and pursue international solidarity with workers globally.' We are, under AAD instruction, affiliated to the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, so when we received a request from the PSC to take part in a delegation to Palestine of general secretaries and senior union officials it seemed entirely in keeping with Society policy to participate.

As well as ASLEF, trade unions who sent representatives included the RMT, the TSSA and the NUJ. The delegation was made up of two general secretaries – our own Mick Whelan and Manuel Cortes of the TSSA – two presidents, two executive committee members and a full time officer (District 3 Organiser Colin Smith). We were accompanied by a lawyer and a journalist (Tim Lezard of the NUJ) and supported by two members of the PSC staff and an invaluable Palestinian driver who acted as guide, translator and general fix-it man.

Having arrived in East Jerusalem midway through the afternoon of Tuesday 21 July via a flight to Tel Aviv, and due to leave for our return to London at lunchtime the following Monday, we had five days in which to learn about life for

Palestinians in the territories occupied by Israel. We had access to much of the West Bank, facilitating an extensive programme of visits and meetings with workers, trade unions, human rights campaigners, community leaders and politicians from right across the region.

AS THOUGH NOTHING COULD FALL

Wednesday's activities kicked off at 9am sharp at the local HQ of the United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs for a two hour briefing, giving a broad overview of the situation in both Gaza and the West Bank. This was followed by a briefing and tour with the Civic Coalition for Palestinian Rights in Jerusalem, covering many aspects of how the Palestinians suffer as a result of the illegal Israeli occupation and, in particular, the use of transport infrastructure to entrench the occupation and settlements in East Jerusalem, and the increasing settler activity in Palestinian neighbourhoods.

Thursday took us to the Jordan Valley where the itinerary included a meeting with the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions in Jericho followed by a visit to a Palestinian village and a tour of a neighbouring Israeli settlement.

Friday morning saw us in a Bedouin village in Nakab, southern Israel, hearing from their community leader. The afternoon was spent in Hebron with the president of the Palestinian Postal Service Workers' Union witnessing settler activity and the effects of the occupation.

Saturday's location was Nazareth at the Workers' Advice Centre, and a meeting with Palestinian road haulage workers at Sindyanina of Galilee.

AND NOTHING WILL HELP US

Sunday was spent in Ramallah with the leadership of the PGFTU, a visit to the tomb of the late President Yasser Arafat, and a meeting with Dr Mustafa Barghouti at the Palestinian Medical Relief Society.

Our final meeting took place on Monday morning, prior to departure, when we heard from Knesset member Haneen Zoabi.

Our meetings with these organisations provided a wealth of information and statistics illustrating the extent to which the people of Palestine suffer as a result of the occupation. The oppression is not only physical but economic and cultural. They suffer human rights violations on a daily basis. Their Israeli oppressors control their access to electricity and the supply of water. In some parts of the West Bank water usage for Palestinians is restricted to 20 litres per



person per day. The World Health Organization says people need between 50 and 100 litres each day to meet their basic needs. Palestinians have limited access to public infrastructure with the roads from many towns and villages blocked by concrete barriers.

Although Israeli law is deemed to apply to anybody working for an Israeli employer there appears to be a lack of willingness in the courts to enforce this. Consequently there are no meaningful rights for Palestinian workers employed by Israeli companies. Health and safety legislation is almost non-existent. Sexual exploitation of women at work is commonplace and largely unreported. Workers face random polygraph testing and industrial blacklisting, not just of individuals, but entire families.

WE CAN BEAT THEM, FOR EVER

But it was the personal testimony we heard, and the things we witnessed first-hand, that were most disturbing. The story of Nabil who has had the extension he built on his home forcibly taken by the government and given to Jewish settlers is beyond belief. Not only does he have no choice but to stand and watch as the settlers come and go using what should be his front door, he has also suffered an attack by their dog. Equally difficult to comprehend is the account from the Bedouins whose makeshift village has been demolished by bulldozers with military support a total of 86 times. The stark difference in the access to water where Israeli settlements with communal swimming pools neighbour Palestinian communities where water is rationed, an ambulance carrying out emergency service being deliberately detained at a checkpoint and the tear gassing of children were all deeply troubling.

The Israeli's West Bank barrier, known as the Wall, enforces segregation, and the oppression of the occupation. The Wall, built some years after the Berlin Wall came down, separates the



ASLEF reps joined a trade union delegation to report back on the plight of the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. Photos: Marz Colombini, Brian Corbett and Tim Lezard

And the shame was on the other side



TIM LEZARD, a freelance journalist, editor of USi News, and a former president of the NUJ, reports on the possibility of a political settlement in Palestine

TRADE UNIONS in Palestine are asking their counterparts in Britain to boycott Israeli goods. A statement signed by 14 unions calls for a boycott until Israel ends its occupation of Arab lands, dismantles the Wall running through Jerusalem, gives Palestinians equal rights and allows refugees the right to return home.

'Palestinian workers will suffer as a result of a boycott,' concedes Omar Barghouti, founder of the Palestinian National Boycott Committee, when we meet him in Ramallah. 'But freedom has a price and we're prepared to pay that price. Every resistance carries a price tag. If we don't do this, we choose either armed resistance or we surrender. And we will never surrender to the occupation as our fate.'

The boycott is also backed by Dr Mustafa Barghouti, general secretary of the Palestinian National Initiative. 'We'd like British trade unionists to adopt the boycott of Israeli goods. A boycott is not against the Israeli people, but against Israeli policy.'

We met Haneen Zoabi, one of 13 Arab

MPs in the Knesset, who told us we – as UK trade unionists – have more power over her government than she does. 'It doesn't matter what we say. The Israeli government doesn't care about the Palestinian people, but it does care about what people in the world think of Israel. Nothing will change here until Israel pays the price, economically, politically and diplomatically.'

She wants to see a secular, equal, democratic state. Addressing the Israelis direct, she says: 'We must be here as equals. You came to my homeland. It was not the Palestinians who emigrated. It was you. You want my land. You want to expel me. It is ethnic cleansing. You hope the old will die and the young will forget. We won't forget. It is our history. We know our history. You don't. We know the names of the trees. You don't.'

The main target for the boycott is Hewlett Packard, which not only profits from developing systems to racially profile Palestinians and track and control their movements, but is also complicit in limiting the areas of the West Bank to which they have access. HP also provides the Israeli navy's IT infrastructure. Trade unionists can also put pressure on companies such as Ahava, G4S, Sodastream and Veolia to cancel their contracts in Israel.

Agricultural products from illegal settlements built on Palestinian land is being sold in UK supermarkets. The Palestine Solidarity Campaign recommends the best way to participate in the boycott is to check whether it says 'Product of Israel' and, if it does, put it back on the shelf in solidarity with the Palestinian people.

🔴 You can follow Tim Lezard on Twitter @TolpuddleTim or visit www.usilive.org



PALESTINE: AN ISSUE FOR US ALL

ASLEF, as a trade union, stands in solidarity with workers around the world. Palestinians living under Israeli occupation struggle every day; to find work, to get permits to work, to get past checkpoints, and to negotiate decent wages and working conditions. They struggle to get access to adequate housing, basic sanitation, health care, food and water. Many have been displaced and forced into exile. It is because of these injustices that ASLEF, along with 14 other trade unions, is affiliated to the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and is calling for a lifting of the ongoing blockade and for Israeli compliance with international law with regard to the people of Palestine. By raising awareness of the plight of the Palestinians, by developing international solidarity, and by using political, economic, and social pressure, we aim to bring hope to the Palestinian people and to realise their ambitions for justice and a lasting peace in the region.

🔴 The Palestine Solidarity Campaign campaigns for peace and justice for Palestinians, in support of international law and human rights. It is opposed to all forms of racism, including anti-Semitism. Find out more at www.palestinecampaign.org

The real cost of the privatised railway

JOHN STITTLE forensically examines how rail privatisation has been an unmitigated structural, operational and financial disaster for this country

EVEN Margaret Thatcher thought that privatising the British railway industry would be too politically and financially troublesome. But John Major, her successor as prime minister, had no such reservations and widespread criticism of rail privatisation was pointedly ignored. The fully integrated and nationalised British Rail had been widely regarded as one of the most cost effective, most efficient, and least subsidised railways in Europe. But, even so, the Tories' ideological obsession with privatisation ensured it was broken up and sold off to the private sector. For passengers, taxpayers and the rail industry, the past two decades has increasingly revealed privatisation to be an unmitigated structural, operational and financial disaster.

SCANDAL AND INCOMPETENCE

The original plan of splitting train operations from the track owners was the first mistake. It didn't take long for the first infrastructure owner, Railtrack Group plc, a listed company, to neglect the country's rail infrastructure by putting shareholder returns above safety. But worse problems came from another section of the industry. In a ludicrous attempt to bring competition into the industry, the Conservative government drew on many ideas from right-wing think tanks. The outcome was that the government franchised train operations by seeking tenders from private companies. To shore up their plans, legislation specifically barred the government and local authorities from bidding for franchises – even if they could do the job better and cheaper.

This franchise method for passenger trains has led to scandal, incompetence and an utterly inefficient method of operations. The franchising method is heavily loaded in favour of the companies who conduct all sorts of strategic bidding games in tendering for the contracts. Most of the franchisees are operated through specially established companies – termed special purpose vehicles. These SPVs are largely empty shell companies which have few assets and little capital invested. Such companies can be easily wound up and legally limit any liabilities to their parent groups. Even performance bonds lodged by the parent companies are relatively low and no real deterrent if a franchisee decides to cease trading.

When GNER found the going too financially tough – it just walked away with few penalties;



John Major (right) went where Margaret Thatcher (above) feared to tread and privatised British Rail. We are all now paying the price of his folly

followed swiftly by NXC. Other franchise awards collapsed even before they started, such as the West Coast. In addition, although privatisation has transferred the TOCs' profits to shareholders – many risks or financial shortfalls remain with the UK taxpayer. For example, many TOC franchises still allow financial top-ups from the government if revenue falls below original forecasts. The government largely takes the hit for the TOC's poor performance – not their shareholders.

FINANCIAL TOP-UPS

Let's not forget the rolling stock companies, either. When the rolling stock was sold off to three private sector companies many management buyouts made eye-watering profits by quickly selling the companies on. Even the shareholders in these companies were initially protected by government-backed guarantees to their lease rental income. Today, international banking and investment groups have moved into this sector, buying up the RoSCos that have, in effect, an almost guaranteed market from the TOCs. These financial groups have quickly realised the low investment risks and high returns that are available in this sector for the benefit of their own shareholders.

Passengers are also increasingly carrying the costs and burdens of privatisation. The rail regulator's own figures show that only one-third of passenger ticket revenue is regulated (in line with the retail price index). For the unregulated fares, TOCs have been able to subject passengers to unrestricted and ever increasing fare levels. Indeed, the rail regulator notes that, overall, unregulated long distance standard class tickets have increased 49.8% over and above inflation since privatisation. Even over just the last decade, off-peak tickets in London and the south-east have increased almost 20% in real terms, with ever more onerous ticket usage restrictions being imposed.

The wholesale fragmentation of the

Look what you gain when you travel by train



railways has seen soaring overall industry operating costs. Provisional research findings by academics at universities in Essex and London indicate that the additional cost of privatisation could be adding up to £3 billion each year to the industry's operating costs.

These additional costs are now being largely carried by the taxpayer and passengers and by placing ever increasing demands on employees in the industry. In real terms, by 2010, annual government subsidies had more than doubled since privatisation. Even now, government subsidies are still higher than before privatisation but the DfT has more recently been reducing subsidies by switching more of the funding burden to passengers instead.

COSTLY AND FRAGMENTED

The Rail Delivery Group and the government continue to misleadingly point to the approximate doubling of passenger journeys and passenger kilometres as evidence of the success of privatisation. Undoubtedly there has been increased passenger traffic but this growth has been in spite of – not because of – privatisation. Passenger traffic growth is far more significantly related to social and economic factors such as changes in gross domestic product, levels of employment, disposable income, housing costs, road congestion and motoring costs.

But the real cost of privatising Britain's railways comes from the destruction of a previously efficient and cost-effective nationalised industry. Public service has been sacrificed in favour of a costly, structurally complex and fragmented industry – often more concerned with generating profits for private sector shareholders than running a public transport service.

● John Stittle is Professor of Accounting in the Essex Business School at Essex University. He is the author of *Privatisation, Profits and the Pursuit of Private Sector Vested Interests* and *Taken for a Ride: The Privatisation of the UK Rolling Stock Industry*.

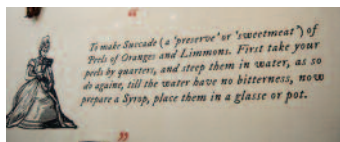
A tale of two palaces

Hampton Court is celebrating 500 years since Cardinal Wolsey got the builders in. As KEITH RICHMOND reveals, it's really two palaces, not one, which means double bubble when you want to walk in the footsteps of the great men and women of history

If *Wolf Hall* – either the bestselling, Booker Prize-winning, book by Hilary Mantel, or the BBC adaptation starring Mark Rylance, Damian Lewis, Jonathan Pryce and Claire Foy, which won plaudits when it was broadcast earlier this year – whetted your appetite for a nice rich slice of English history, get along to Hampton Court Palace, which this year celebrates five centuries at the heart of the story of our nation.

It was in 1515 that Thomas Wolsey, chief minister of Henry VIII and the most powerful man in England, began building a palace to rival the most spectacular in Europe. It wasn't, though, the first building on this site. The Knights Hospitallers of the Order of St John of Jerusalem – the Crusaders who responded in the Middle Ages to the Pope's call to recapture the Holy Land – acquired the manor of Hampton in 1236 and the hall they built became a popular staging post between the royal palaces at Byfleet and Sheen.

Giles Daubeney, Lord Chamberlain to Henry VIII, took out a lease on the property in 1494 but it was Wolsey, the son of a butcher and a man on the make who rose through the ranks in Tudor England to become a cardinal, and Lord Chancellor, who transformed a substantial private house into a magnificent royal palace. In 1525, ten years



after building began, Wolsey formally presented his palace fit for a king to Henry; a shrewd move, you might think, which nonetheless failed to prevent his fall from grace when he was unable to persuade the Pope to annul the king's marriage to Katherine of Aragon. Jane Seymour, who was born at Wolf



Hall and died at Hampton Court, provided Henry with the male heir for which he was desperate and the prince – later Edward VI – was baptized in the beautiful royal chapel here.

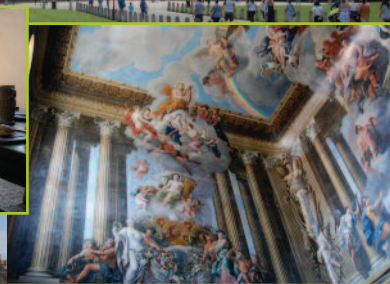
James I, who reigned from 1603-1625, spent his first Christmas as king at Hampton Court, entertained by plays and masques performed by the King's Men, including William Shakespeare, and began a



religious debate here which resulted in the glories of the King James Bible. Charles II added a new tennis court and when his brother, the Catholic James II, was deposed in the Glorious Revolution of 1688, his daughter Mary and her Protestant husband William didn't much like the old Tudor palace – much too dark and old-fashioned, they felt – and commissioned Sir Christopher Wren to design an ambitious baroque masterpiece to rival those of Louis XIV.

But they ran out of money – it happens to monarchs as well as to the rest of us – which is why Hampton Court is not one, but two, architecturally and historically quite different palaces, sitting cheek by jowl, on the one site, in magnificent grounds, right by the River Thames which was, for many years, the quickest way to get to Westminster or the City of London.

It's a great day out. You feel, as you walk across the cobbles, through the courtyards, up and



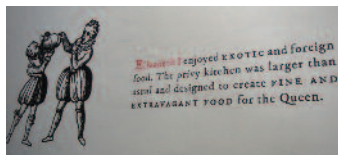
500 years of history at Hampton Court. Photos: Lucy Knox

enormously impressive; while outside you can easily lose an afternoon wandering through the walled and formal gardens, the parks and the maze.

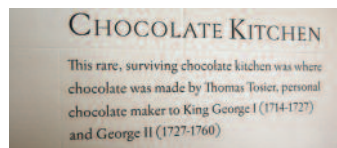
The bricks and mortar, paintings, pots and pans, as well as the 17th century muskets, pikes and drums (displayed on one wall like an art deco

down the stone steps, and by the longest herbaceous border in the world, as if you are walking in the footsteps not of the American tourist a few steps in front but of the figures you read about in history books or see in period dramas such as *Wolf Hall*.

Henry VIII's kitchens, underneath the Great Hall, and the much smaller chocolate kitchen offer a fascinating insight



into life back then; as do some of the more intimate bedchambers where you can see where they washed and slept and made love (and, in the case of the velvet-covered royal privy, had a crap). The Chapel Royal, Cumberland Art Gallery and Fountain Court are all



installation) excite the imagination. As do the exhibitions. *The Story of Young Henry VIII*, for example, tells not of the 'fat, tyrannical, vicious' old king but of 'our natural, young, lusty and courageous prince...above usual height with an extremely fine calf and leg' Damian Lewis, then, rather than Keith Michell. It's brilliantly and beautifully done, with bite size bits of information written on walls, high-backed chairs and even stitched into the carpets as you move through the rooms. A real chance, as Cher once sang, to turn back time...

◉ Hampton Court Palace, East Molesey, Surrey, KT8 9AU, is open from 10am to 6pm seven days a week until 24 October; and from 10am to 4.30pm from 25 October until 26 March 2016. Adults £19.30, children £9.70, concessions £16; family tickets (up to 2 adults and 3 children) £48.20. Hampton Court station is 35 minutes from Waterloo on South West Trains.

Proud to be ASLEF

IT WAS a great pleasure to welcome Mick Whelan, Andy Hourigan and Colin Smith to Preston branch. Everyone spoke very well, but we found the GS's broad brush strokes about where we are as a union inspiring and interesting, especially the light he shed on the tactics of employers, government and media. Policy decisions which at first seem relatively benign can impact severely on our sisters and brothers in this industry. I am thankful that a man of Mick's calibre, intelligence, and views, who understands the complexities of our industry, and the current harsh climate we must deal with, is at the helm of our great union, as now more than ever we must see each other as fellow train drivers regardless of

who we currently work for.

I have always been proud to be a member of ASLEF. I joined because once I went into the grade I was told, 'It's the drivers' union, son.' It was then, it is now, and may it always be! Because this great union has, for 135 years, brought us a long way. So always remember the unity and steadfastness of those who have gone before us and the sacrifices they made to ensure the strength of this union and our position as drivers today. I hope we will always stand shoulder to shoulder with our leadership. So thank you Mick, Andy, Colin, chair Andy Pearson, secretary Darren Brown, company council Graham Fazakerley and all at the branch for a great evening.

Mark Baker, Preston



The July meeting of Bishop's Stortford branch was held at the Half Moon public house. Attendance was boosted by several retired members, GS Mick Whelan and our District Organiser Nigel Gibson. Branch business was dealt with briskly and Bro Mick gave a well-received speech and included the remarks deemed so provocative by the right-wing rags the previous day. The general secretary then presented a service badge to Nigel and the meeting finished with an enjoyable buffet.

Richard Roscoe, Bishop's Stortford

NEWTON HEATH AT THE MILLGATE

A superb turnout ensured an excellent afternoon at this popular venue with drivers from far and wide – Holyhead and Inverness – meeting retired colleagues plus Newton Heath men who transferred to other TOCs. The room stood in respect for the loss of Jimmy Bate, ex-branch secretary, LDC and a 105 committee founder member sadly missed. A terrific buffet and booze raffle under the new stewardship of Andy Gee and John Patterson.

SM Black, Newton Heath RMS

Upcoming events

CRICKLEWOOD – FRIDAY 18 SEPTEMBER

The next reunion, in memory of Bob Hodson, is at Kidderminster, meeting at 11.30, for a trip to Bridgnorth. Anyone who knew Bob is welcome to join us. Details from Grahame Nash (gwnash.nibs@blueyonder.co.uk).

NORTHAMPTON – SATURDAY 26 SEPTEMBER

Northampton BR train crew reunion from 16.00 at the Old Black Lion opposite Northampton Castle railway station. Commemorating 21 years since the closure of this legendary depot. All welcome, including other ex-BR depots, new entrants, managers and Bletchley Wills! Enquiries to Graham Croucher on 07841 678018 or croucher@phonecoop.coop

RAINHAM – THURSDAY 1 OCTOBER

Southeastern retired and working members' reunion from 11.00 at Rainham Social Club, 86 Station Rd, Rainham, Kent.

COALVILLE – SUNDAY 11 OCTOBER

It's 25 years since our little depot shut. To mark the occasion, we're having a reunion at Hugglescote social club from 12.0. £5 per person to cover the cost of the food, cheques payable to P Geary to 4 Dennis Street, Hugglescote, Coalville, Leicestershire, LE67 2FP. Details from Ian Farnfield on 07900 905 931.

☛ Please send your branch news and photographs to journal@aslef.org.uk

Bombing along the B17



David and Trudy: Forest full of flowers

Tony West, national secretary of the Retired Members' Section, travelled to King's Lynn with committee members Alan Taylor, Les Muir and PJ Smith, for their branch meeting. Peter Emmington, company council, offered a detailed report and District 5 Officer Nigel Gibson and District 5 EC member Howard Kaye gave an update on ASLEF, their interaction with the companies they deal with, and the outcome of the general election and its ramification for trade unions. RMS speakers told members what we do and why we do it (not only for retired members but for our working colleagues and their families). Then we celebrated the retirement of driver David Histon who received his 25 year badge, gold pocket watch, a model and framed picture of the Class B17 Nottingham Forest, the team he supports, and his wife Trudy received a bouquet of flowers. Presentations were also made to Paul Lane (40 years); Mark Fox (35); Ian Jewell (25); chair Tony Watson (15), and Joe Rudd (5).

Peter Smith, RMS



Cliff Blackwell, aka the Captain, receiving his engraved tankard from Steve Wilson, Freightliner Intermodal business council, after standing down as branch chair; Tom Casey getting his 40 year badge from Allan Gosling; and Andy Pearson receiving his 25 year badge from the branch secretary. 'I'm retiring after 49 years on the footplate,' said Cliff. 'But, like Arnie, I'll be back. In the RMS.'



A special presentation was made to Clive Miller at the Old Oak Common reunion on 9 June. David Kirkland, a former depot manager, presented Clive with the nameplate from the 08 loco named in memory of his father David 'Dusty' Miller. More than 100 retired drivers, guards, maintenance staff and active staff attended, and a great day was had by all!



Gary Mawdsley (right) receives his retirement certificate at St Gerard's Catholic club. Gary, branch secretary for many years, took early retirement after 36 years on the railway.
Graham Fazackerley, Preston



District Organiser Nigel Gibson (far left) and branch secretary Graham Philpin (far right) presented loyalty badges to Tim white (second left) for 30 years' service and Justin Cooper-Keeble for 10 at the recent Colchester beer and badges meeting.
Graham Philpin, branch secretary

End of an era

The retirement of Leeds drivers Dennis Harriman (left) and Gary Mountain (right) bring to a close the link with steam days at Leeds depot. Both drivers recently retired from service after completing a joint total of 100 years. Dennis and Gary both started in 1965 as engine cleaners at Holbeck, progressing through the grades from cleaner to fireman and on to main line driver. They have witnessed some of the major changes affecting the railway industry: the end of steam in 1968, the introduction of the Pacer and Sprinter fleet,



industrial unrest in the early 1980s, local depot closures and the creation of Leeds train crew depot, East Coast electrification, privatisation, franchising and various TOCs. Both were a joy to work with and their professionalism was an example to us all. To attain 50 years' service on the footplate is a remarkable achievement.
John Moans, Leeds

They shall not pass



Motherwell branch – EC member Hugh Bradley; chair J Lafferty; secretary Andy Jones; local rep T Ferguson; and E Kearney – attended the second North Lanarkshire No Pasarán memorial committee ceremony in Duchy Park. After a brief service, which included speeches from No Pasarán committee

member John Milligan, and Mike Arnott of the IBMT, we laid wreaths in memory of those who fought and died for liberty.

Andy Jones, branch secretary



Mick Holder looks back to September 1915 and tales of life and death on Britain's railways

DRIVER DIES ON ACTIVE SERVICE

The Nottingham branch secretary reports: 'It is with deep regret that I have to report the death of one of our soldier members, Lance Corporal TH Daley-Newton, 1/7th Battalion, Sherwood Foresters (the Robin Hoods). Our late brother was the first member of this branch to volunteer for active service, being at camp with the Territorials at the time war was declared. He went to France and there received wounds which resulted in his death on 2 August 1915. Our brother leaves a wife and child to mourn his loss, and their sorrow will be shared by every member of this branch, and also by a large number of fellow workers outside as our late brother had proved, during his railway career, that he was a sound trade unionist.'

ADVANTAGE BEING TAKEN OF US

A report by Inceite about a joint meeting between Wigan and Ince branches says: 'There are now more grievances amongst us than there were before the war, and advantage is being taken of railwaymen whilst they have been patting us on the back and calling us loyal fellows. They have been forcing on us worse conditions both in work and wages. Many of these conditions were brought to light at this meeting, viz bad coal, less wages, reduction of trip rates, overworked firemen owing to the bad coal, engines not in a fit working state, and tyranny and overbearing of locomotive foremen. The meeting decided to take action at once and appointed a committee to get to work.'

GUARANTEE OUR RATES OF PAY

The editor comments: 'Much discontent is felt on many railways owing to the reduction of drivers and firemen caused by the slackness of trade arising from the conditions of war, and it is argued on behalf of the men affected that seeing the companies have government guarantees against loss of revenue, they should also guarantee to their men the rates of pay to which they had attained by seniority and good conduct prior to the war. The whole question has now been submitted to the Board of Trade for consideration on a national basis.'



JOE KIDD A BORN LEADER

Joe Kidd, Darlington branch secretary for more than 30 years until his retirement in 1988, passed away suddenly, but peacefully, on 19 July at the age of 90. Joe was a born leader and organiser who always ensured the branch had a united and hard working committee. He served as LDC secretary for many years with JW Flowers and WT Hughes and was the Darlington delegate at AAD in 1965, 1968, 1972, 1980, 1984 and 1987. Additionally, he was also elected by conference as its chair in 1976.

All his life – right to the end – Joe was a tireless campaigner. Along with other trade unionists he led the campaign in opposition to the closure by British Railways of the North Road workshops which, following

Joe: tireless campaigner right to the end

literally millions of pounds of investment (at 1960s prices) in new machinery, a new heating system, and overhead cranes, etc, were recognised at the time as being the most modern and efficient of all BR's workshops.

The 150th anniversary of the opening of the Stockton & Darlington Railway in 1975 saw Joe and the Darlington branch committee organising a brilliant ASLEF exhibition in celebration of the first public railway to use locomotives to haul passengers – the template for the rest that followed, worldwide.

As branch secretary, and with the assistance of his wife Joan, he organised branch functions every year of a very high standard. And, after his retirement, he organised frequent reunions, along with other retired colleagues, a tradition that still continues to this day, now involving all grades.

Joe broke new ground when he became the first serving trade unionist to become a Justice of the Peace, a position he held for 22 years. And yet still he found time for other pursuits when winding – down particularly gardening, becoming chair of the Darlington Chrysanthemum & Dahlia Society and officiating at its regional and national shows. He doted on Joan, and his family who meant everything to him, and they considered him a great joker, and a lot of fun, as well as being the family's inspiring, and protective, head. This same trait was evident when looking out for and defending the interests of his brothers and sisters in ASLEF, men and women working on the railway, and those for whom life was no picnic nor filled with privileged advantage.

Farewell Joe. You certainly made a difference for the better in countless people's lives.

J Clark, Darlington



Jim Wilson: well-liked and well-respected

JIM WILSON TRIBUTES ON FACEBOOK

Retired King's Cross driver Jim Wilson (1926-2015) has died at the age of 89. Unfortunately, Jim has not been mobile in recent years; his mind was willing but his legs were not. A great person, well-liked and well-respected, as the many tributes on Facebook from his colleagues and former second men, who enjoyed his company while working together, showed. Jim continued to support ASLEF as a member of the RMS.

Peter Smith, King's Cross

BOB EUAN CHAMPION BOWLER

Bob Ewan passed away while on holiday in St Lucia in April. He was 78 and, since retiring, had enjoyed many holidays with his wife Isobel, especially in the Caribbean. He started as a number taker at Markinch (Fife) in 1952. He moved to Thornton as a cleaner, after national service, returned there as a fireman, and then as second man on diesels. He moved to Saltley in 1976 to become a driver, coming home to Edinburgh in 1989 to finish his career at CrossCountry. Bob was a champion bowler, loved his garden, supported Newcastle United, and was a proud ASLEF member.

Davie Dobie, Edinburgh No 2

RALPH HOLDEN SOMERSET & DORSET

It is with great sadness that I have to report the death of ex-Bath Green Park and Bristol Bath Road driver Ralph Holden who passed away on 7 June. He was 91. Ralph was an ex-Somerset & Dorset man. His early career as cleaner, fireman and eventually driver was all spent at Green Park depot. He transferred to Birmingham for a short time during World War Two where he was involved in working troop trains. He moved to Bristol Bath Road when the Somerset & Dorset line closed in 1966 as part of the Beeching cuts. Towards the end of his career Ralph became medically restricted and finished his railway career as a shed driver at Bath Road. He retired in the mid-1980s. His son Geoff also worked at Bath Road, eventually becoming a relief driver; he left the railway at the same time as Ralph retired to go travelling, eventually pursuing a career in agriculture. In his spare time enjoyed the company of his family and sitting down to watch the rugby with a pint or two. Ralph will be much missed by his sons Bruce and Geoff, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, friends and former work mates.

Bernard Kennedy, Bristol

ARTHUR HOFERT KEEN FOOTBALLER



Arthur managed the Canvey Island all-stars

Arthur Hofert (1946-2015) started his railway career from school in 1961 at Ripple Lane as an engine cleaner. He passed to be a driver in 1969 and married Connie in September that year. In 1970 he went to

Bricklayers Arms to gain his driver's position, working there for just a few months before returning to Ripple Lane as a driver. Arthur was a keen footballer as were his two sons Darren and Graham. He went on to manage a football team, CM88, on Canvey Island to encourage their flair for the game. In 1995 he was forced to take early retirement due to ill health. He spent a lot of his time encouraging his twin grandsons to play, as they had the same love of football as Arthur. He suffered from cancer of the gullet which led to his death on 30 June.

Dave Davis, East Ham

JOE REILLY A REAL HERO

It is with sadness that I report the passing of retired Derby driver Joe Reilly aged 94. Joe began his footplate career at 18 as a fireman. During the Second World War he tried unsuccessfully to enlist in the Navy on three occasions, even sneaking off to Lowestoft after being refused at Derby but, as a railway worker, he was reserved occupation status. Joe recalled his war time years which included having to leave trains on the outskirts of Birmingham and Coventry because of German bombing raids. On one occasion as he was crossing Birmingham he rescued a woman who was trapped in a bombed house, Joe's slim build came in handy and he crawled into the cellar and rescued the trapped woman although sadly her husband had been killed.

Joe often worked troop trains carrying American troops. He remembered how he stayed in lodging houses all over the country as working a steam train one way often meant an overnight stay to work a train back the next day. He loved steam trains but was equally happy on diesels and was a main line driver in the top link with one of the best road cards at Derby. He also played football for the Derby motive power team 4 shed as a goalkeeper.

Joe met his wife Doris of 70 years at Derby station; she was a porter and when she was struggling to pull a



Joe worked troop trains during the war

heavy trolley he went to help her! Joe retired in 1987 after 47 years and attended his last ASLEF reunion in 2014. Joe was a very proud member of ASLEF and will be making his last journey wearing his badge and tie. Derby branch passes on its deepest condolences to all the family at this sad time.

Eamonn Tague, Derby

NORMAN RICHARDS BATH ROAD AND SPM

It is with great sadness that I report the death of ex-Bath Road and St Philip's Marsh driver Norman Richards. He passed away on 6 May at the age of 75. Norman began his railway career in the early 1960s. He came into the footplate grade and joined ASLEF in March 1965. Like many passed men of his seniority Norman had to wait many years for his driver's job due to the cut backs and depot closures of the Beeching era. Norman eventually got his driver's job at Bath Road in the mid-1980s.

Following privatisation and the depot split Norman chose to work for Great Western on the Paddington route. Towards the end of his career Norman became medically restricted from main line duties, finishing his railway career at St Philip's Marsh HST depot as a shed driver. Norman was very popular person evidenced by his well-attended funeral on 5 June at Cranford crematorium. He will be much missed by his family, friends and former work colleagues.

Bernard Kennedy, Bristol

ALBERT LAWSON BIG MAN AT BEDFORD



Albert: Oh, what a beautiful morning

Albert Lawson, a retired Bedford driver, LDC man, health & safety rep and valued committee member of the social & welfare club. He was 87 and had been suffering from dementia for the last few years.

Many of us attended his funeral to pay our last respects to a man we all knew well and who contributed so much to all of those at Bedford depot.

He was a big man with a big voice who loved singing 'Oh What a Beautiful Morning' at the earliest hours just to let us know he was about. This was played, at his request, as we joined together at the crematorium.

Current drivers have much to thank Albert for as he worked tirelessly for 'the men.' Many of today's conditions of service would never have been achieved without his massive contribution which led us into the driver restructuring period. As a driver, many new boys benefited from his knowledge of the job, how to survive and enjoy it. His representations at form 1 hearings achieved astonishing results for the accused who lived to drive another day. I have lost a close colleague from many years on the LDC, the depot has lost a man who will go down in the history of our depot for his efforts on behalf of all ASLEF members. Our deepest sympathies to Albert's wife Bet, daughter Kim, son Andrew and his grandchildren.

Bill Davies, RMS, Bedford



Peter's foreign travels were mostly sponsored by the bingo club

PETER RIDER TRAVELLING MAN

I have to report the passing of another Ripple Lane retired driver: Peter Rider (1941-2015). He started his working life by doing five years in the Merchant Navy seeing some lovely parts of the world, lucky that his wife Sandy stood by him and they never drifted apart. After becoming a landlubber he joined the railway where he stayed for over 30 years, retiring when the depot closed.

Pete was a family man and lived life to the full enjoying his grandchildren, having some lovely holidays abroad sponsored by the local bingo club. He also enjoyed using his free passes with days out on the train.

He loved gardening, his pride and joy being the big fish pond, and rock and country music.

He was diagnosed with cancer two years ago and, sadly, passed away peacefully at home on 13 March. The service was well attended by extended family and friends and a contingent from Ripple Lane depot. He was buried alongside his wife who sadly died in 2002.

Cliff Blackwell, Tilbury



We welcome letters, either by email to journal@aslef.org.uk or by Royal Mail to **ASLEF Journal at 77 St John Street, London, EC1M 4NN**. Each month the writer of our **star letter** wins a rich range of ASLEF regalia.



Rank and file on the ration

Having read the account of the International Brigades Memorial Trust event in Hamburg (*Journal*, July) I feel the following question needs to be asked. Did the organiser of the weekend break extend an invitation to any member of the rank and file or are overseas breaks the preserve of those further up the chain of command? Judging by the image that accompanied the report, I perceive the latter to be the case.

We affiliate to the IBMT on a national basis so it was particularly pleasing to see a strong ASLEF presence at this anti-fascist event, but was it really necessary to send a delegation that was composed of the general secretary, two district organisers, three executive committee members and three company councillors? Another IBMT weekend in Cork was composed of the GS, four EC members and three DOs.

One of the aims of the IBMT is to educate people about the men and women who fought in the International Brigades. Offering an ordinary member an equal opportunity to attend such events would not only be in keeping with the spirit of those who fought and died in Spain, it would also encourage more reports at branch level that would comply with the aims of the trust. Like ASLEF, the officers of the International Brigades were democratically elected. Any meagre rations obtained were shared equally among the officers and those in the ranks.

Steve Richardson, branch secretary, Waterloo Nine Elms

Reintroduce rest days

As a ScotRail driver I do not wish Sundays to be part of the working week. If this happens I shall be withdrawing my membership. I hope we do not go down the road of selling more conditions away, or even a four on four off shift pattern where we end up working every day of the year, apart from Christmas Day, like East Coast. Can we not have at least one day when we are guaranteed to spend time with our children which, at this present time, are Sundays, Christmas, and New Year's Day! All this is about is money! I would like to see the reintroduction of rest days so we can all work together to give each other lieu days as, at the moment, we need to put lieu days in a year in advance which is crazy, in this

STAND UP, SPEAK OUT AND HEAD FOR AAD NEXT YEAR

A few thoughts about AAD, which I attended for the first time in May. New delegates seemed nervous about what they had let themselves in for, but remember – and keep this at the forefront of your mind – everybody in the room is, first and foremost, a train driver and whatever you say may resonate with someone. Your speech may swing a debate or be taken away by a delegate to accomplish a positive conclusion to a problem at their company.

The knowledge in the room and the range of topics that drivers spoke on was vast; which goes to show that, as a grade, we are aware of issues in the job and, on a greater scale, the problems others have and the struggles they face.

For drivers who have never been and are thinking of going, I'd say



ASLEF's annual assembly of delegates in Southend with Daniel Masrani and Ryan Howe listening attentively

visit AAD to watch first, then get nominated, and motions from your branch. This is so important! I don't see the point of going without motions from the drivers you work with. Every depot should be able to put at least three (you have four) motions forward. And, when you get to AAD, speak about these

motions; don't waste your voice, even if it isn't your branch's motion, get up and get involved in the discussion. Don't worry, you will be listened to, respected and supported for speaking; even if nobody agrees with you, that's your opinion and your contribution is important!
Ryan Howe, Exeter

day and age, for my holidays! I worked for many a big international company before I joined ScotRail in 2002 and was shocked to discover how antiquated it is! I still can't get an annual lieu day/holiday accumulation form. When I worked with a large bus company in Edinburgh and required a lieu day that week I got it!

Ian Lach, Edinburgh

I owe colleagues so much

I would like to thank ASLEF and my home branch of Motherwell for the support I have received. At the end of September last year I had the misfortune to fall from the roof of my

house, badly shattering my left ankle. The NHS consultant attempted to repair the damage but although the fracture has now healed there is no cartilage in the joint and arthritis set in. I am looking at a further operation to fuse the joint to relieve the pain. I am able to move around with a walking stick but, unfortunately, ScotRail can't find anything else for me to do despite my consultant saying I can return to work doing alternative duties (2km along ballast would be impossible at the moment). I have been off work for a while and am on half pay. I would like to thank ASLEF for the kind donation from the benevolent fund. ASLEF is not just there to back you up legally, when you need it, it does much more and I am

so grateful. I would also like to thank my fellow drivers and other rail staff at Motherwell who had a collection for me. It's very humbling to realise your colleagues are so generous, especially as they are also having to cover my shifts. I owe them all so much, which I'm sure they won't remind me of!

Ian McLeod, Motherwell

Attack on democracy

I was not surprised to read in our local press here in Manchester that the Conservatives may have been aware during the general election campaign that the funding for the so-called Northern Powerhouse rail investment scheme did not exist! They proclaimed they were now the party of working people but what exactly have we witnessed? In the recent budget attacks on the working poor while giving tax breaks to millionaires and then their legislation where a person's basic democratic right to strike is to be eroded by introducing strict criteria on voting numbers while employers get the legal right to bring in agency staff to break strikes.

The Labour Party comes under direct attack with legislation on funding from trade unions, which aims to reduce Labour's capability as a political force, which is an attack on democracy itself. At my company ASLEF members displayed great solidarity recently after one of our colleagues was harshly treated during a disciplinary hearing. The driver in question is now back driving. We have five more years of the nasty party but, if we stand together, we will never be defeated!

Steve Hill, Piccadilly No 1, FTPE

Thank you, colleagues

As the Cleethorpes driver who was permanently removed from the driving grade by the FTPE safety panel after a safety on the line incident, which was deemed by my colleagues and the ASLEF executive committee to be a gross miscarriage of justice and misinterpretation and abrogation of FTPE CDP policy, I wish to express my deepest gratitude to all involved in my reinstatement to driver. I would like to thank all Cleethorpes, Sheffield and Doncaster colleagues for their many expressions of support during this traumatic time. I would also like to thank Cleethorpes LLC, Immingham branch, Doncaster, Sheffield and all other TPE branches who wrote to the EC asking for support.

Thanks, too, to district company council reps, ASLEF's full time officer and EC for their hard work, phone calls and unanimous support in respect of my case.

Finally, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my colleagues in ASLEF who supported me by voting so positively during the ballot for industrial action against FTPE as

they were all prepared to take direct strike action in defence of the abrogation of the CDP policy. My family and I found this an extremely humbling experience, and will be forever grateful to my ASLEF brothers and sisters.

Darren Gibson, Cleethorpes

A bloody expensive diary

I cannot tell you exactly how many times I've heard the expression, 'that's a bloody expensive diary' when the union dues rise along with our pay. What I can tell you is that the cost pales into insignificance when ASLEF's dedicated union reps help you out of a corner that is not entirely of your own making. With that in mind, I would like to thank my local LDC (Battersea) and Southern company council for the support they have shown me over the last 14 months. In particular, Graham Hoy, LDC, and Kevin Eade and Dave MacLennan, company council, must have got fed up with me emailing, ringing and constantly asking for advice, while preparing my case, but they never wavered in their dedication in helping me to a just conclusion. So, brothers and sisters, that little diary is well worth its cost when the subs that purchase it help you keep your job!

Steve Foy, Battersea branch

Homage to Caledonia

The Labour Party is in agreement with the Tory austerity measures. That's why they voted with them on it. Also, Labour is in favour of keeping and renewing Trident. If you're trying to sell the Labour Party to members in Scotland, you must think we have very short memories indeed.

Alan Sweeney, Perth

5 Live Finn made my day

I heard Finn Brennan being interviewed on Radio 5 Live about the Night Tube. I thought Finn was fantastic in his explanation of the dispute and his arguments for trade unions unapologetically striving to improve life for their members. I particularly loved his advice to a disgruntled commuter – the old 'I haven't had a pay rise for 50 years!' – to join a trade union and fight for a better deal. Finn's calm and cheerful dialogue with the reporter was, in my opinion, a great example for any trade unionist or campaigner. Great work – thanks for making my day!

Colin Nolan, Central College Nottingham

Breath of fresh air

Thank you very much for organising the London wide cycle to work day on 6 August. I thought it was a great success. My only suggestion for next time is to ban cars, too.

Patrick Johnson, Barnet



BATTLE OF BRITAIN Mark Hardie of Ashford branch has produced two badges to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Britain in 1940. £5 + £1 p&p with proceeds to the Royal British Legion poppy appeal. Order via his PayPal account at mark121hardie@gmail.com using the friends and family option with your name, address and choice of ASLEF or Spitfire badge.



LONGSIGHT badges to mark 125th anniversary. £5 + £1 p&p. Also a bespoke tie at £8 + £1 p&p. Contact Jim Hopkins on 07810 564804 or jimmyhopkins@hotmail.com for details.



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ASLEF-NUM 30th anniversary of the miners' strike. King's Cross twinned pits. Profits to Justice for Mineworkers. £5 + £1 p&p from richard.sullivan7@ntl.world.com



ISLE OF WIGHT 150th rail anniversary commemorative badge. £4.99 inc post and packaging. Contact Fratton driver John Glazebrook on 07823 881495 for details.



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BANBURY badge, £5 plus p&p, proceeds to Katherine House Hospice for looking after Brother Chris Farmer during his final months. Contact Jim Browne on 07717 847057.



BLAND ENCOUNTER by Donald Wightman is a comedy novel about risqué encounters on the railways. A donation from the sale of each book will be made to the Royal British Legion and Help for Heroes. Paperback £7.99 ebook £3.95 from www.amazon.co.uk



COWDEN CRASH commemorative badges, price £5, to mark the 20th anniversary of the accident. Contact Mick Green at userg4163@aol.com if you are ex-Norwood train crew.



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After Harriet, what is the point of the Labour Party?

The budget from George Osborne, which unleashed an outright assault on the young and the vulnerable of this country, was breathtaking in its callousness, but not surprising. After all, we in Scotland have been warning of such cuts since pre-referendum, but it was time for the Labour Party to stand up and scream from the rafters about this outrageous attack on the poor. But, no, there were no screams, no challenges to rethink and realise what these cuts are going to do to the most vulnerable in society. Instead, acceptance by the Labour hierarchy that this would not be opposed because by standing up for working people they would harm their chances of election in the future. After accepting the previous £30 billion of cuts Harriet Harman gleefully said they would not be opposing these welfare cuts, either. So what is the point of Labour?

The answer is there isn't one. Labour long ago gave up any pretence of being a socialist party and is now seen as a spineless party scared to oppose the most devastating cuts to our working-class in this country. Which leads me to my next question. Why do we, as a trade union, have such a blinkered view of Labour? Are we unable to see that the Labour Party we all grew up with no longer exists? I can only come to the conclusion it is through the self-



Labour's acting leader Harriet Harman woefully mishandled the party's response to George Osborne's budget

interest of individuals in our union and no longer represents the views of our members.

I speak, of course, primarily of Scotland as we have wholly rejected the Labour Party and its weak-minded attempts to gain power by drifting to the right day by day, with the most recent poll suggesting support for the SNP sits at 57% ahead of the Holyrood elections next year. It would appear another wipeout of Scottish Labour is on the way. Indeed, the SNP trade union group now has 16,000 members,

more than the whole of the Scottish Labour Party. The fact that Scotland returned 56 SNP MPs to Westminster (out of 59) must give this union pause for reflection and call into focus the need to speak to the members of ASLEF as to whether we should keep affiliating to a party so bereft of any moral fibre or willingness to fight for those that need it most, not only in Scotland but in the rest of the UK.

We are fortunate in Scotland to have alternatives to Labour in the form of the SNP, SSP, Green Party, Solidarity, etc, and I know of many people up here who are members of one of these parties. I cannot say the same about the Labour Party. Tom Burns's letter (*Journal*, July) was good until his ridiculous comparisons between the SNP and UKIP. It was not the SNP shouting about the need to curb immigration but Labour and their ideological bedfellows the Tories, and if anyone has any doubts about SNP priorities they should watch Mhairi Black's maiden speech; an inspiring working-class girl who puts the Labour Party to shame.

We should engage with our members and open a dialogue as to where this trade union, politically, is going because our present stance cannot claim to be representative of our members' views if we have not asked them. I fully intend to take this to my branch for discussion, because up in Scotland Labour is dead and it died telling lies for the Tories.

Liam Tansey, driver, Virgin East Coast

What a legacy for Labour

I was quite bemused to read Bro Tom Burns's letter (*Journal*, July) on how UKIP is the bedfellow of the SNP, as Labour was annihilated in Scotland for being against immigration, secular in its ideology in a drive not to be internationalist, in the death throes of the last few weeks of the general election campaign. Perhaps if Tom stood back and realised that Labour's policy on chasing UKIP supporters was doomed to fail, not an image that millions of working people wanted to embrace, just because the right-wing media was thrusting Nigel Farage into the spotlight.

Closer to home and the Scottish Labour election mandate was to kick a football around for a photo opportunity, with Jim Murphy telling us sectarian chanting and drinking at football games was acceptable behaviour and should make a hideous comeback in 2015. Perhaps if Scottish Labour allowed its own members the right to one member one vote on supporting, or not, a vote on Scottish independence, then it might not have called 45% of its own Scottish members traitors, many walking away never to return.

Labour would have been better served enticing Lib Dem voters who had lost faith in their own party over tuition fees, yet Labour couldn't do this, still charging £6,000 to students, a moment not lost on these disenfranchised voters, aghast at their kids' ballooning debts.

As we all face working into our 70s before retirement, what a legacy of systematic failure in social justice, Tom, which fails to address the concerns of working people.

Niall Campbell, Yoker

Your support a huge help

Having been off work for 10 months, I would like to thank all the union offices that made a donation to the hardship fund set up for me by the union at the Boston branch of East Midlands Trains. The money raised has been a huge help and I don't think I would have made it through without the support of ASLEF. I would also like to thank Nottingham branch for their fantastic support and help getting me back to work.

Robert Felstead, Nottingham

We support your action

My wife and I returned from our holiday in Italy on Thursday 9 July. After a long and complicated journey we arrived by train at Liverpool Street in the early evening and, because of your strike, had to walk to Cannon Street for onward travel. This was obviously tiring and inconvenient. We would like, however, to assure you that we completely support your action and will continue to do so in future. Best wishes for a successful campaign.

John Wilks by email

If you get a chance, take it

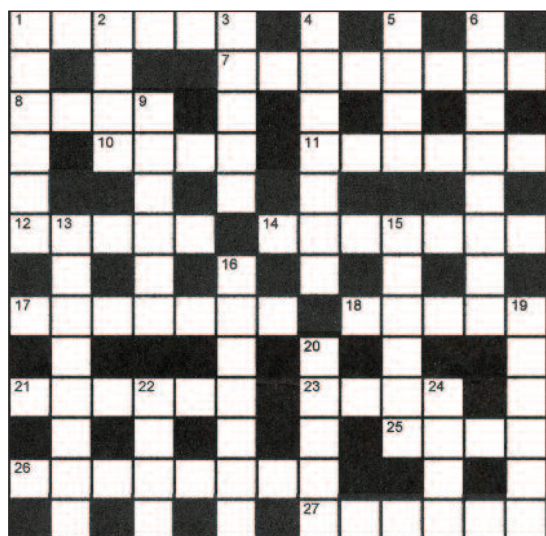
Finally, after 18 months of hard work, I have completed a TUC education diploma in equality. It has, at times, been a bumpy but always an extremely fascinating journey, examining in depth the issues faced by many of our predecessors as they struggled for recognition and equality throughout the last century.

Attitudes in the 19th century towards migrants and people with disabilities are still prevalent today through the spin of the right-wing press and this nasty Tory government. Turning the working-classes against each other has always been a strategy of the ruling class. There is nothing new under the sun, and still a long way to go for a more equal society.

I couldn't have completed my course work without the help of so many colleagues, too many to mention, but I would like to thank our equality adviser Lee James, for all her help and support, and the ever patient LDC and branch secretary at Paddington, Neil Grant, Kev Battishall and Steve Austin. And all the branch secretaries in Districts 1, 5 and 7 for providing such a great return on my questionnaire. I can't recommend union learning highly enough. If you ever get the chance to take a TUC course, do it.

Collette Gibson, Paddington branch

Prize Crossword number 113 by Zebedee



Solution to Prize Crossword number 112 which appeared in the August edition of the ASLEF *Journal*

Across: 1 Brae 4 Sycamore 8 Hibiscus 9 Ring 10 Wales 11 Rooster 14 Pomelo 16 Emblem 18 Bombard 20 Bible 23 Toll 24 Emeritus 25 Horsefly 26 Flex
Down: 2 Raita 3 Evil eye 4 Sock 5 Customer 6 Mares 7 Elgar 12 Eve 13 Four leaf 15 Ono 17 Bailiff 18 Batch 19 Bolus 21 Louise 22 Bevy

Congratulations to **Mark Owen** of **Wistaston, Crewe, Cheshire** who was last month's winner.

Across

- 1 Similar things placed in order (6)
 7 Note in music equal to half a minim (8)
 8 An element of quartz in crystal (4)
 10 Spirited match (4)
 11 Fortified wine (6)
 12 Society seen breaking up around a Rhine settlement (5)
 14 It joins one other for a breather (7)
 17 Daybook (7)
 18 Celtic language (5)
 21 Collection of star systems (6)
 23 Former communist country (initials) 4

25 The red planet (4)

- 26 international -----, imaginary boundary which separates time zones (8)
 27 Alloy of tin and lead (6)

Down

- 1 Make a sound like frying fat (6)
 2 Ladder step (4)
 3 Prison guard (5)
 4 Firearm missile aimed at an easy or casual target (7)
 5 1/64th square mile (4)
 6 Almost an accident (4-4)
 9 Ate greedily (6)
 13 Illegal passenger (8)
 15 Belief is held by these people (6)
 16 Large green long-horned

- grasshopper of North America (7)
 19 Member of a European light cavalry unit, renowned for elegant dress (6)
 20 Drink of bourbon and sugar and mint over crushed ice (5)
 22 Prayer ending (4)
 24 Flat floating platform for swimmers (4)



The winner of this month's crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25

MARKS & SPENCER

Name.....
 Address.....

Postcode.....

Thanks for all your responses to the 112th ASLEF crossword in the August edition. If you successfully complete this month's crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF *Journal*, 77 St John Street, London, EC1M 4NN by 14 September

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FREE LEGAL ADVICE ASLEF also provides first class free legal advice – both for members and for their dependents. In the last year, ASLEF has recovered £6,769,848 in damages for all types of cases.

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